

**FARM tenancy is displacing farm ownership, says Mr. Nichols, who presents figures to prove the case. He urges the formulation of a definite program to restore to farms a population owning the land it tills.**

**T**HE alarming increase in tenant farming is perhaps the greatest menace to the developing of a more satisfactory agriculture. This is well shown by the results

in Kansas: In 1880 only 16 per cent of the farms of this state were operated by tenants; now the proportion is 48 per cent, and is increasing every year. Sumner County has 55 per cent of tenants while in Lincoln Township in Pratt County, where 30 years ago only 13 per cent of the farmers were tenants, today more than 60 per cent of the land is so operated. The seriousness of the situation is made obvious when we consider that the most prosperous and productive agriculture can be built only by home owners.

If agricultural states are to possess that peculiar strength with which tradition has endowed the "embattled farmer," then some program will be needed to restore to farms a population that owns the land it tills and give to agricultural communities that unsailable strength and pride which come from home owning. The short term lease system is a crime against the soil, the tenant and the state. No scheme of rotation of crops for the benefit of the soil can be satisfactorily worked out on a basis of yearly leases. No community pride can be developed among citizens who expect to move next year, and no plan for better roads and schools and farm homes can be expected to receive the support of those who are only temporarily attached to the ground they cultivate. It takes a community of home owners to work out the better farming systems.

In nearly every state during the last three or four decades the farm population has not only relatively but actually decreased. Since 1880 the population of Kansas has increased 70 per cent. The increase of the population in cities has been 368 per cent, while the increase in the country population has been but 32 per cent. This is a bad record, and its continuance holds a serious menace to the welfare of the nation. This is not peculiar to Kansas but will hold good in practically every agricultural state. Experience in Indiana, Illinois, Nebraska and Iowa is along the same lines and, in fact, in some of these states the tendency is much more pronounced.

There are many factors which have caused this increase in tenants; the causes vary somewhat with the locality. Perhaps speculation and the abnormal land hunger of many men have had something to do with this. The extensive purchase of land by rich "landlords" also has helped; this is the cause of the large percentage of tenants in Sumner County, Kansas. No matter what the causes, however, the results of tenant farming are unhappy, and they are increasingly serious.

To control this tendency toward tenant farming, it is essential that some very advanced work be done in the study of the land problems of the country. Doubtless much sound legislation will be necessary. It will be best for the progress of this country if there is a general discussion of the land problems now, while there is still time to direct the growth of land ownership. Every old nation has had to meet this problem of redistribution of the land. Always in every age and country this great and fundamental possession of the soil has gone the way which highly desirable possessions always go—into the hoard of the rich. The forward-looking nation is meeting this problem by wise and constructive legislation. In other days it has been met in some lands by bloody revolution.

In Kansas the aim is to control this situation by legislation. The last regular session of the legislature, under the leadership of Henry J. Allen, the governor, started a program that is full of promise. Three amendments to the constitution were proposed, which will give the legislature power to carry out the advanced study which is now being made on land problems in Kansas in the form of legislation.

The first of these amendments is known as the "Farm Homes" amendment and will enable future legislatures to use the credit of the state for aiding deserving citizens, who desire to live upon farms, to obtain ownership thereof. The amendment itself is merely an enabling act for future legislative bodies. If adopted, the operation probably would be that the legislature would create a land commission and place at its disposal a revolving fund. This fund would not need to be an excessively large one, for, as lands were purchased and sold to those who would live upon them, securities with the guaranty of the state behind them equal substantially to the money supplied by the state and bearing a reasonable rate of interest would find a ready market. The title to the land would remain in the state until payments were completed, so there would be no opportunity for the state to lose.

Another constitutional amendment upon which the people of Kansas will pass judgment at the election of 1920 is one that will enable legislature to classify property for taxation. The Kansas constitution adopted in 1859 contained what is known as a "general property clause." Under it all taxation is at a uniform and equal rate, which sounds well, but does not work out in practice. No consideration is given to the economic value of property, to its ability to pay or to its ability to hide and thus escape payment of taxes. Whereas in the beginning of taxation under the Kansas constitution practically all property was tangible—that is, land and stock and merchandise—perhaps one-half of the property of the state which ought to bear a share of the burden of maintaining the state is now in intangible form, such as stocks, bonds and notes, that are easily

rendered invisible. The state tax commission estimates that property of this character to the extent of 600 million dollars escapes the tax assessor every year. The bank commissioner of Kansas puts out glowing statements of the deposits which represent the wealth of the state, but a ridiculously small proportion of it is ever located for taxable purposes. Other states than Kansas have been through the same experience and with few exceptions have amended their constitutions.

"Besides allowing much property to escape taxation entirely," said Governor Allen recently, "the present system is so rigid that it puts the burden on the man who owns his home and improves it because he owns and loves it. Here is a farm well improved. The farmer is industrious and thrifty, and he has built a house and a big red barn, and the tax assessor says, 'This is a fine farm. We will have to stick the taxes on it.' Across the road is a farm owned by an absentee landlord with a tenant on it. There are no good improvements on it, for the tenant is trying to get all that he can out of the soil in the short time that he is to live on it and it is not to his interest to build houses or barns, for next year he may have to leave it. The land may be more productive than that across the way, but the tax assessor does not see it. He gives that farm a light assessment valuation. He penalizes the farmer who improves his place and lets off lightly the absentee owner who expects his main profit to come from an increase in the value of the land rather than the yearly production of the soil.

"The 'Tax Amendment' to the constitution simply gives the legislature freedom of power to establish and maintain a system of classification by which a distinction may be made in such cases. It also contemplates that farm mortgages will not be taxed. Three times the legislature of Kansas has passed an act exempting mortgages from taxation. Twice a governor of Kansas has vetoed these acts and once the Supreme Court has

held such a law to be unconstitutional, although at the same time expressing the belief that the system should be changed. There is a popular belief that exemption of mortgages from taxation favors the lending classes. This is not the case. It is the universal testimony of men who have had experience that taxation of mortgages is not only double taxation but hinders the worthy tenant in obtaining land of his own."

The third amendment to the constitution allows the state of Kansas to construct permanent roads. It is believed that a good system of roads is essential in the developing of the most satisfactory agriculture. At present the national government, the county, the township and the property owner, all may participate in the building of good roads, but the state may not. Because there was extravagance and waste in the building of canals in the first half of the eighteenth century, some states put a constitutional bar against the state participating in internal improvements. This situation influenced the writing of the Kansas constitution, and today Kansas is one of the few states that retain the original inhibition. Kansas has reached the point where the in-door pastime of laying out roads and trails on paper has given way to actual construction, and the electors may say whether future legislation may place the state in the list that contains the national government and the people in the construction of permanent highways.

This, in brief, is the Kansas program for the encouraging of home owning. The state proceeds on the theory that as it has been well demonstrated that home owners are essential in developing the most satisfactory community, from a social, economic or productive standpoint, it may well concern itself with encouraging home ownership. The ideal is to bring the power of the state into the fight for the big and satisfactory agriculture of the future which is just within reach.

## To Encourage Home Owners

By F. B. NICHOLS

## Shedding Light on Niagara Falls

By CARROLL EVERETT

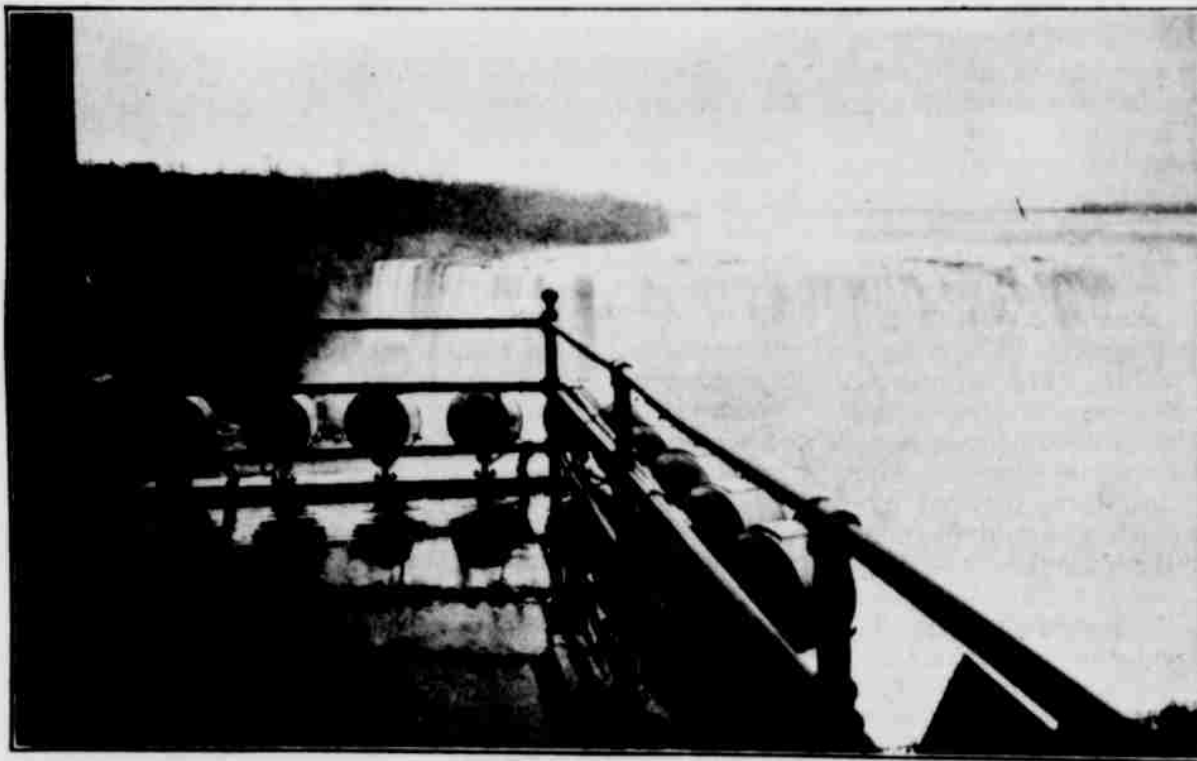
**I**F YOUR train is late and you do not reach Niagara Falls until after dark you need not wait until the next morning for a first glimpse of nature's wonder. Science has solved the problem of making the Falls

however, the crest of the Falls becomes screened by the spray from this position and it was evident that a bank of projectors located above the level of the roadway could illuminate this crest and add to the effect.

Consequently a group of 10 narrow angle projectors was installed at the corner of the observation gallery on top of Table Rock house. Both these positions are on the Canadian side.

For the lighting, 1000 watt lamps are used. Special water-proofing was necessary because of the exposed condition of the lights, and because of the presence of the spray. Heavy flexible conduits prevent an accumulation of ice and sleet from putting a strain on the wires.

The conditions existing at the Falls are different to any usually encountered in flood lighting and the distances from projectors to surface are very much



Battery of powerful searchlights which illuminate Niagara Falls at night.

available for the sightseer at any hour. Scores of powerful flooding lights now cast their beams into the swirling spray, and transform the Falls into an illuminated spectacle.

The Falls, in spite of all their attractions during the day, had until recently been, so far as sight-seeing is concerned, rather a dead place, after darkness fell. They were only dimly visible, and the visitor had to content himself with vague outlines and the roar of the rushing waters.

Now, however, the Falls have taken on a new beauty. Thousands are seeing the great waterfall under the light of the great projectors, which penetrate the darkness and, except for occasional clouds of spray, throw the Falls into relief. The largest battery of lights, 81 in number, is placed on the roof of the Ontario Power Company's generating station. This spot presents an unobstructed view of all parts of the Falls, except for the screening action of the spray, is out of the way of the public and is close to the source of power. Under some conditions of wind and spray,

greater, ranging from 600 to 1,300 feet. Many experiments were made and many mathematical problems had to be worked out before the size, number and location of the lights was determined. The official opening of the flood lighting was a feature of the visit of the Prince of Wales, who himself pressed the button which started the illumination.



Appearance of Niagara Falls under the rays of the searchlights.